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ASSOCIATION OF COMMUTER RAIL EMPLOYEES

Statement of the Association of Commuter Rail Employees
Transportation Committee
February 27, 2023

Senator Cohen, Representative Lemar, Senator Hwang, Representative Kennedy and members of the committee:

My name is Ed Valente. I am director and general chairman for Local 1 of the Association of Commuter Rail Employees (ACRE).

Our members are conductors, engineers, signalmen and other crafts, who played a major role in keeping Metro-North Rail service running during the pandemic where we went to work every day. We lost several members to this virus—but we never backed away from our commitment to the customers.

Governor Ned Lamont's "Time for CT" initiative will shorten transit times by improving tracks, signals and making more station improvements. Ultimately, hundreds of millions of dollars will be invested in this initiative. Early positive results are being seen: Service was expanded last July with six new express trains to Grand Central Terminal and nine new trains on the Waterbury branch.

Senate Bill 1082, the Department of Transportation's legislation, will broaden the commuter rail council into a new public transportation council. We appreciate the fact that one of the appointees made by the governor will be a resident who regularly commutes on the New Haven Railroad Line.

Senate Bill 1078 will require DoT to put the management of the Shoreline East Rail Line to a competitive bid. ACRE strongly supports this provision. We believe, in fact, that our experience and knowledge could be an asset in the event a new vendor is chosen. The bill also calls for DoT to acquire new rail cars for the Waterbury and Danbury branches as well as provide for additional stops and stations in several towns. I can tell you that the demand for service in those areas continues to increase. More stations will result in more riders, but we fully realize that the upgrade will cost dollars, and that this needs to be balanced against other competing budget demands.

In conclusion, ACRE wants to thank you for your continued commitment to commuter rail service in Connecticut. Our job is to get our passengers to their destinations safely and on-time. I maintain that our members do this job well, and they do it with a very high degree of professionalism. This is happening despite one of the most difficult times in our history.

Thank you for considering the views of the Association of Commuter Rail Employees (ACRE) on these two bills.